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No final decisions made on filling empty council seat

By Pippa Fisher



Although the topic was on the agenda at the Nov. 13 Lafayette City Council meeting, no decisions were made regarding the process for filling a now-vacant council seat. Mayor Don Tatzin encouraged any residents who might be interested in serving to contact the city clerk for an application form. The decision will be up to the new city council when they are seated at the Dec. 10 meeting, with interviews taking place soon after.

The council must appoint a new city council member to take the place of Council Member Mark Mitchell, who passed away unexpectedly Nov. 5. Since there are fewer than two years left of that term, government code states that the seat must be filled by appointment within 60 days of its becoming open, rather than by special election.

Lafayette City Council at the dais during its Nov. 13 meeting. Photo Jeff Heyman, City of Lafayette

With Vice Mayor Cam Burks having left the meeting early to catch a flight, and Council Member Ivor Samson having stepped out of the room because of potential conflict in the ensuing discussion, there was no quorum. Agreeing that any decision made so soon after losing Mitchell would be untimely and inappropriate, and better left up to the incoming city council lineup in December, Tatzin and Council Member Mike Anderson heard public comments from more than a dozen residents offering their thoughts on next steps.

All expressed their sorrow at Mitchell's passing and noted how he will be missed. There were two main differences in the types of comments beyond that, however.

Many suggested that since the city has just had an election, the appointment should go to third place candidate Ivor Samson, arguing that this represents what the voters wanted. Others, however, said that usual procedures (applications and interviews) should be followed and suggested that third place might not have been third choice had there been three openings on the ballot.

The item was received and filed and will come back on the Dec. 10 agenda for action by the council, which will then see new Council Members-Elect Teresa Gerringer and Susan Candell join Burks and Anderson.

Also discussed at the same meeting was the ongoing process for hiring a new city manager following City Manager Steve Falk's decision to retire at the end of the year. Tatzin says he has received proposals from four hiring firms. Again the council was in agreement that the new council should be as involved as possible with all steps of the process. Falk said he would expect interviews to take place in early to mid-January before the new complete city council.

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